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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 6933
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5102
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1431
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2006

In Today's Papers

Cartoon Crisis

All papers: Violent protests continue all around the world over the political cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed. Turkish PM Erdogan sent letters to 80 world leaders urging them to protect sacred values from insults but also to show restraint, adding that violence cannot be justified. Italian PM Berlusconi and US Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried extended support for the joint statement issued Monday by the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Spain in an effort to ease the tension. Responding to questions after his meeting with the Chairman of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB), US Ambassador to Turkey Ross Wilson was quoted as saying that "publishing cartoons of the prophet Mohammed was an ugly act; however, responding to different opinions with violence is very wrong, too."

Commenting in the mainstream daily Milliyet, Sami Kohen writes that the crisis has broadened the gap between the Islamic world and the West and has helped "resurrect" the hate and rage of the past in the Islamic world toward the Western world. Kohen states that despite the religions origins of the crisis, there are political, ideological and cultural factors as well, concluding that, "anyone sensible in both the Islamic and the Western world is aware of the fact that this crisis must be settled before it grows even more."

Iran Reacts to the Cartoon Crisis; Nuclear Pressure
Hurriyet, Vatan, Milliyet: In reaction to cartoons depicting Mohammed, Iran retaliated by announcing a holocaust cartoon contest. Iranian newspaper Hamshahri decided to launch a contest for cartoons on the holocaust to test whether the west will apply the principle of freedom of expression to the Nazi genocide in the same way that it is

applied to the Mohammed cartoons. Iran also announced yesterday the suspension of all trade and economic ties with Denmark, and banned Danish products from entering the country.

Cumhuriyet and Turkish Daily News reported that Iran has asked the International Atomic Energy Agency to remove their surveillance equipment from its nuclear facilities by mid February.

Priest Murder Suspect Captured

All papers: A 16-year-old high school student was detained yesterday as the suspected murderer of an Italian priest in Turkey's Black Sea province of Trabzon. The suspect reportedly said that he was disturbed by the cartoons of Mohammed published by the western media. Although the interrogation of the suspect continues, most papers believe that the murder was linked to the cartoon crises.

US-Turkey Rice Dispute

Sabah, Vatan: US Trade Representative Rob Portman requested that the World Trade Organization appoint a dispute settlement panel to hear US allegations against Turkey for restricting imports of US rice. Portman stressed that American farmers were being denied access to Turkey's rice market because of Turkey's unfair import restrictions. "We still hope that a solution can be reached and that Turkey will allow US producers to compete fairly in the Turkish market, Portman said.

US Budget Proposal: Increase for Defense, Cuts to VOA
Radikal, Milliyet: Among proposals in President Bush's draft US budget for 2007 was the elimination of Turkish

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broadcasting of the Voice of America (VOA). If the budget is approved, starting from October 1, VOA's 12-hour weekly radio broadcasts, half-hour TV broadcasts and the Turkish Internet page will be eliminated. Moreover, 14 VOA Turkish service staff members in Washington and other staff overseas, including those in Istanbul and Ankara, will be lose their jobs. VOA officials stated that the reason for this decision is the need for additional spending on other areas such as the Iraq war and reconstruction of the areas hit by Hurricane Katerina. Meanwhile, the White House, after decreasing education and health expenses, requested a 6.9 percent increase for the Pentagon in its draft budget for 2007. If the Congress approves the budget, military spending will have increased 48 percent since 2001.

TV Highlights

(NTV, 8 AM)

Domestic News

- The suspect in the killing of a priest in Trabzon confessed, saying that he was affected by the Danish cartoons.
- While on a reward trip to Italy for successful Turkish Ford dealers, twelve Turks were killed and 18 others injured when their tour bus crashed in Rome.
- Former Naval Commander Admiral Erdil was sentenced to nearly three years in prison for corruption and abuse of authority
- Five journalists appeared in court to face charges of violating Article 301. The hearing was postponed until April 11.

International News

- Cartoon Crisis: Four dead in demonstrations in

Afghanistan; protests in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Palestine continue.

Economic News

- The US has requested the WTO Resolution Board review its complaint against Turkey related to rice import restrictions
WILSON